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ANNIE HARLOW, OR THE COUNTRY SCHOOL.

BY MRS. S. M. HUMPHREY.

[CONCLUDED.]

"Music, music!" joyfully lisped little Mary Lee, the same little cherub that had expressed her sorrow so touchingly.

"Music! music!" was echoed all around. The sunshine fairy of happiness and contentment returned, unable to resist the magical strains that softly summoned her.

"I've got a tunning little letter for Mit Harlow," cried Mary Lee, as she held up a neatly folded note. "The doctor div it to me, and he tised me, too;" and she bounded into the school house, her bonnet thrown back, and her laughing face just peeping from amidst a profusion of golden curls.

Annie put back the disordered hair, and kissed her fondly. As she perused the note her face mirrored a gratified heart. It was a pressing, yet polite request to sup with the doctor's family. Mary, who had been gazing earnestly at her, said, "Mit Harlow, don't cry now. She has dot a good letter. Her loss old mudder didn't send it."

Annie looked surprised at the little prattler, but instantly she recalled an occasion, when the perusal of a letter from home, bringing a crowd of fond recollections, had quite overwhelmed her. In reply to the child's inquiries, she had simply informed her that the letter was from her mother. She could not repress a smile, as she explained to the innocent one the true state of the case.

"My mudder is loss," said Mary, mournfully, "and Ned Fisher says she drinks wine."

Annie averted her head, to hide the blinding tears, for too well she knew that sweet little Mary Lee had an intemperate mother!

Delightfully sped the evening at Dr. Green's, in music and conversation. The benevolent old gentleman, whose heart had never been cheered by son or daughter, and who consequently had spent many lonely hours, looked with deep interest on Annie and Fortescue, so young, so fair, so full of hope; and from the evident satisfaction of his guests, he derived a happiness not less than their own; while they thought him the most agreeable, the best, and kindest old gentleman they had ever seen. As they concluded a sweet plaintive air, and the mingling melody of their voices died away, the doctor removed his glasses from his eyes, and brushing away a tear, said, "My children, while you have been singing, a little plan for amusement, and may be benefit, has occurred to me. Never, to my knowledge, has there been a picnic here; but several times in my travels in other places, I have been favored with an opportunity of attending them; and I think them the pleasantest and most natural entertainments in which I have ever participated. My idea is, that we get up something of the kind, say for the children, with permission to invite their parents. Like you, Annie, I believe in rendering children happy."

"Oh! delightful," cried Annie; "just the thing!" and her eyes beamed pleasure.

"And what charming groves you have for the purpose," said Warren.

"Charming, indeed," replied the doctor. "And how sweetly the woods will echo the music of the children's happy voices, as they sing some of those good old water songs, led by Warren and Annie; and then we will have some large swings suspended from the tall trees, and likewise a generous repast of cakes and fruit."

As Annie was leaving the doctor's door, attended by Fortescue, the old gentleman whispered in her ear, "Remember, it will devolve on you to assist me in entertaining my guest while he remains with us; and who knows, but you may find a recompense! Stranger things have happened."

"I am confident that I shall be recompensed," replied she, secretly rejoicing that the pale moon had not power to reveal her blushes.

And Annie did find a recompense, and affectionately indeed was Mr. Fortescue entertained by her. Annie asked no other recompense than the society of so winning and intelligent a gentleman, and she never weary of his varied, instructive, and amusing conversation. Together they sought out and analysed mosses and flowers, of which were found in these parts many rare and beautiful kinds. Often, from the summit of some green hill, they witnessed the most glorious of all scenes, a summer sunrise. With feelings of awe and admiration, they contemplated the gorgeous hues and silvery floating clouds of the wide arching blue, as it bent to the horizon, while they inhaled new life and fresh beauty from the fresh morning breeze. Annie repeated to Fortescue many little incidents of interest connected with her school, and he soon learned to regard her favorites with an interest only equalled by her own.

A party in the grove! shouted happy voices, as the children rushed from the school house.

"A party in the grove," reiterated Job Brewer, "and Miss Harlow is going! That don't seem much like old Barney, does it,

Mike? Don't you remember she said we were lazy, good-for-nothings, because we went to a clam bake on Saturday afternoon? She called us grown-up babies, and said we had enough better to be work. I wonder what she would think of this."

"Sure enough," said Mike Hastings. "And what would she think if she was to see my wise father and Dr. Green, and Mr. Larkins, and worse than all, farmer Goodwell's cane, go limping to a party. My father will go, I know he will. He likes Miss Harlow so well."

"And farmer Goodwell shall go, too," said Job, "and his wife. Poor old folks! they don't take much comfort of life."

The day for the picnic arrived, and a fine day it was. The children, in their clean clothes, with their clean, bright, laughing faces, were assembled at an early hour. Annie, dressed in pure white, with a single moss rosebud peeping from her wavy brown hair, reminded one of purity and love embodied.

"Aint our schoolmarm pretty?" asked Job Brewer, for the hundredth time; and "aint she," was repeated with strong emphasis by the boys.

"She is coming this way," said they, for she had not yet recognized them, although they had done their best to attract her attention.

Then such a brushing of hair and elevating of heads was seldom seen, plainly proving that no common character was near. And they, as she kindly took them by the hand and greeted them cordially, well knew that they were objects of interest to her. Kindly she smiled on all, both old and young. Job's dark eyes beamed his gratification, as she seated herself between the rough old farmer and his wife, and commenced conversing in gay and pleasant tones, as if resolved that they should be led to feel the joys of the occasion.

And he knew that the old man's heart grew tender while listening to her, and he was glad; for often had Job spoken her praises at home, in glowing terms. Sometimes, too, they looked at him, and he knew they were speaking of him, and his heart beat, but not with mortification or fear.

"My mudder has tum, Mit Harlow," said Mary Lee, joyfully, as she presented a pale, haggard-looking woman, though in earlier days she must have been strikingly handsome, for each feature was faultless.

"Mudder, here's my pretty, dodd little toolmarm," continued Mary; and Annie extended her hand, a bright blush crimsoning her cheek, called forth by the child's artless praise.

"I am happy to see you here, Mrs. Lee," said Annie. But you look tired and warm. Go with me, and sit 'neath that shady oak, and rest and refresh yourself."

"How kind, how innocent, how beautiful," thought Mrs. Lee, as Annie led the way, and the poor, neglected woman, so little used to the voice of kindness, wiped away a tear with her coarse handkerchief.

Mary Lee's mother had seen other and far better days. Once she was as innocent and fair, and happy, too, as Annie Harlow. But he to whom she had given her young heart had become a drunkard. Poverty had followed, friends had deserted, and the hapless one, instead of seeking for comfort from the right source, had turned, in the wilderness of her despair, to the intoxicating cup. Now slept her husband in a drunkard's grave, and only Mary was left her, and though she loved the child, the force of long-continued habits clung to her tenaciously. There were no Temperance Societies there, and the case of the confirmed inebriate was viewed as hopeless.

But Mrs. Lee's heart was not at all hard, and as Annie talked so respectfully, even tenderly, to her, and spoke in glowing terms of little Mary's loveliness, a feeling slightly akin to hope and pride, crept through her desolate heart, and she wished (O how vainly,) that she might forget her own degradation. And then, when Annie's swanlike notes floated out upon the air in words that breathed of new life and hope for the poor inebriate, she wept; and hers were repentant tears.

Mr. Larkins, too, who, when it had first been announced that Annie would sing, had turned suddenly away, declaring that he would not hear any of that nonsense, not he, indeed, as the soft, sweet sounds fell upon his ear, had been drawn nearer and still nearer, as though under the influence of a powerful psychologist; and now he stood close to the spot from whence the sounds proceeded, bending forward with breathless anxiety, one ear upturned, as if fearful to miss a single note. Not till recently had he heard of the new arrangement for singing during recess, and not till to-day had requested the "committee man" to put a stop to such nonsense. It seems needless to say the request was never repeated; and though Mr. Larkins did not say it publicly, he acknowledged to himself, that of all the good and pleasant things of that day, the singing was the best.

Just as Dr. Green, Mr. Fortescue and Annie were discussing, in an under tone, the power of moral suasion, in the very midst of the happy assembly, Ned Parsons' father, who had not before had an opportunity of greeting Annie, advanced, and grasped her hand with such warmth, that with difficulty she suppressed an exclamation of pain.

"How d'ye do, schoolmarm," said he; "I have been trying to get a chance to see you, all day. I wanted to tell you what a good boy you have made of my Dick. I am so much obliged to you for that thrashing you gin him. To be sure, his mother felt considerable bad when she saw the blood. But I told her you sarked him right, jest right."

Annie retreated a few steps, and looked him in the face with bewildered astonishment, while Dick, poor Dick, groaned aloud.

The doctor and her friends, noticing her embarrassment, though greatly surprised, endeavored to change the subject by a proposition to sing. But Mr. Parsons was in earnest, and would not be interrupted. "Dick," continued he, "roared, I tell you, and declared he would never go to school again. I didn't know but I should have to gin him another bastin, to make him come. A better boy I never see, than he is now, and I lay it to that, for you know Solomon says, 'Spare the rod and spare the child.' I'm his way of thinking, and I don't believe in playing with boys nother."

"True, neighbor Larkins," remarked farmer Goodwell, "and right glad was I to see my Job come home with a bloody nose. You do jest right, schoolmarm, he'd no business interfering when you undertook to give a bad boy a decent thrashing, and it done um good, every soul on um. If they had got the upper hand on you then, we should have had a broken school, that's for sartin."

"But I don't understand you," said Annie, recovering somewhat.

"Ah, you've forgot it, then, but the boys aint, I'll warrant you," said farmer Goodwell, looking at her with a patronizing smile.

"What shall we do?" said bidding Bill.

"It's all out now, and we must do the best we can," replied Mike. "Own up."

"Boys," asked Annie, turning to them with a look of perplexity, "what does this mean?" The moment she saw their pale and anxious countenances, she was convinced that they well understood the mystery, and she resolved not to press an investigation, for she felt unwilling that a day opening under such bright auspices, should terminate sorrowfully.

But the bold and far-seeing Mike knew very well that an explanation must come, and believing this to be the most favorable opportunity, related the whole story, in his usual witty and comical style, only interrupted by the irrepressible laughter of his amused auditors. It was all quite new to the doctor and his friend, as well as to Annie, and at each fresh disclosure they looked at each other with merriment that scarcely knew bounds. The doctor ever and anon exclaimed, "Capital! bright boys, brave boys! well thought of! I'll risk them anywhere!" When Mike had finished his story, and the peals of laughter which had almost rocked the trees had died away, farmer Goodwell struck his cane good-naturedly into the ground, and cried, "Ha, ha, ha, that's a good one for certain."

"All of that, and no mistake," said Parsons, as he wiped away the tears which his violent laughter had produced.

"And now," said the doctor, smiling, as he laid a hand on the shoulder of each, "I shall never again expect to hear you advocating the 'cowhide'; and I pray you, don't send off Miss Harlow, because of the great truth that something beside the blisters and broken noses has made your boys what they are—ornaments to the place."

"No danger of that," they replied; "she's one first rate schoolmarm, and we want to keep her here always."

"My mudder is sick," said Mary Lee, sorrowfully, "and she is doing to die."

With an anxious heart, Annie hastened to her.

Mrs. Lee was stretched on her coarse, but clean bed, pale and emaciated. "Angel of light," she exclaimed, extending to Annie her thin hand, "I knew you would come. I am sick, very sick. I cannot live but a little while; yet do not weep, rather rejoice. My sins are forgiven, and I shall soon be at rest."

From that time Annie devoted her every leisure moment to the sick woman. She ministered to her temporal necessities with ready skill. She smoothed her pillow, and cooled her burning brow, with her soft hand. She read to her, prayed with her, and the same gentle voice whose sweet songs had aroused her from a fearful lethargy, soothed and cheered her passage to the grave. The benevolent Dr. Green, too, was constant in his attention, and Mr. Fortescue, who, now that Annie was so deeply engaged, felt quite lonely, visited the sick woman often.

Mrs. Lee was dying. The moonbeams streamed with full radiance through the low windows, and seemed to look mournfully upon the scene. The doctor, aided by Mr. Fortescue, sustained her in an upright position, and the tearful Annie waved a snow-white fan to aid her difficult respirations. The little prattling Mary was now quite silent, gazing with childish grief and awe upon the strange scene.

"Fear not," whispered the doctor, kindly, "while I live, little Mary shall have a home with me, and I will be a father to her."

"And should I outlive you, said Mr. Fortescue, "I will see that she has a home and friends."

A smile of gratitude played over the features of the dying woman, and without a struggle or a groan, her worn and weary spirit found an eternal rest. When the last sad rites were performed, Mary was removed from her humble home to the delightful residence of Dr. Green. As his wife was too far advanced in years to take charge of the little favorite, he gave Annie a home under the same roof, as governess for his adopted daughter. The arrangement was extremely gratifying to Annie, for besides affording her next to her own, the pleasantest home in the world, it enabled her to increase considerably, the quarterly allowance which it had been her habit and pleasure to bestow upon her mother, and which, added to Mrs. Harlow's efforts, had rendered them quite easy and comfortable, and enabled her to give the children the benefit of an excellent school at a short distance from the cottage.

Late in September, on one beautiful moonlight evening, Fortescue and Annie wandered forth together. The eyes of the former were sad and downcast, and for a time he was silent.

At length he started from his reverie, and producing a letter said, "This summons me from all these delightful scenes; the purest and fairest of my life, and tomorrow I must go."

"What so soon?" cried Annie, impulsively, and a cold shudder crept over her, and Fortescue felt the hand which rested on his tremble violently.

"Yes, Annie, to-morrow; already have I lingered too long. I have foreign business to settle which demands my earliest attention, and which is intimately connected with my future interests. Time and distance may separate us; but only assure me that change of sentiments never can, and I will ask no more. Say, Annie, can I hope that when months—years perchance—have flown, that you will greet my return with a glad heart—filled with sentiments as kind as those you now entertain towards me?"

Annie's head drooped upon his shoulder, and those sweet, yet bitter tears replied.

He had gone. Her cheek was a shade paler, and her voice more touching in its sadness. But quietly, perseveringly and contentedly she filled her allotted station.

As month after month rolled on, improvement was visible, even to her own eyes, among the members of her interesting school, and she had the satisfaction of feeling that hers was a path of usefulness.

Beneath her watchful care little Mary grew in wisdom and in every grace of mind, and the doctor's home was never before so joyful; for youth and childhood were there, and the merry song and ringing laugh echoed through the once quiet halls.

Twice in each year Annie visited the home of her mother; and oh! with what delight were the seasons welcomed by the glad family! How the once little Henry had grown and improved, and how pretty and pleasant looked the younger ones!

Thus, three years have rolled away. Fortescue having adjusted his business satisfactorily, has returned to gladden the hearts of his old friends and refresh his own, amidst those dear familiar scenes. And he has come too, to claim his lovely Annie. 'Tis the picnic anniversary.

The same company, (with but few exceptions) are gathered that attended their first picnic. The same bright sun diffuses as bright beams as before. The same green trees are bending their shady branches above them. The swings are there, the repast and music. But they are changed. They are far less joyful than before;—and why is it? She who had been to them as some ministering angel of peace, is to depart on the morrow, and they are assembled to breathe the unwilling adieu. The children have gathered in the school-house under her gentle and faithful teaching for the last time, and vain are all their efforts to appear cheerful.

"My father," said Mike Hastings, (now quite a young man) "says that Miss Harlow is going home to be married, and that

never named the subject, his imagination delighted to picture a future blessed with her constant companionship, although he had scarce dared hope that he should ever realize such happiness. Both were young; business would soon call him from the place to visit foreign climes, and he was one who felt the uncertainty of earthly hopes. He knew that Annie was not indifferent to him; the eye has a language that speaks to the heart, and Warren and Annie, who had commended much, well understood each other.

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"My father," said Mike Hastings, (now quite a young man) "says that Miss Harlow is going home to be married, and that

is what I thought when Mr. Fortescue first came back here. If she must be married, he is the only one in the world good enough for her. But what will the district do without her?"

"All I can say," said Job, "is that I wish that he had staid at home and attended to his own business; for I am sure she can do more good here than anywhere, and though I do not expect to go to school much more myself, I should feel really bad to have the younger ones subjected to the severe treatment that embittered our former days, and made us brutes instead of men."

"I really think that Mr. Fortescue is the only happy one here," said Bill Larkins. "I never saw him so smiling in my life. His eye follows Miss Harlow constantly. I know that she wishes he would leave her and give her a chance to weep—for—oh how sad she feels."

"Well Bill," said Mike, "I rather think you would feel happy too, if you were on the eve of marriage with such a good and beautiful little woman as Miss Harlow. But she is coming. She has run away from Fortescue."

Annie advanced, and as she gave her parting advice, tears coursed down their cheeks, and the noble resolutions then formed were remembered even in the sternest years of manhood.

"She has come! she has come!" cried Henry Harlow to his mother, who with the children was seated in the parlor waiting her arrival.

"Yes," said little Edith, "and she has brought some one with her, I wonder who it is?"

Cordial indeed was the greeting, and the happy Edith danced around the room exclaiming, "Annie shall never go away again."

But it might not be so. She was to stay but a little while, and then her presence was to be glad another home. Yet the tears that shone in that mother's eye on the bridal eve were not tears of sorrow; no, they were tears of gratitude and admiration. She yielded her beloved child to Warren Fortescue without a pang; for firm and just was the belief that he was worthy of her. Not even the prospect of a separation marred their happiness.

Warren had chosen a beautiful residence in the city, close on the spot where they had dwelt in the season of their early prosperity. He had purchased and refitted the house formerly owned by Mr. Harlow and presented it to the widow and her children.

Once a year they visited the still loved spot where Annie had labored, and where they had first met.

On these occasions a joyful party assembled in the old grove to greet her, for still she had a place in the hearts of the people, and still was she interested for their welfare.

Mary Lee was still a favorite and often visited them; and when good Dr. Green had finished his labors and gone to his reward, Mr. Fortescue gladly fulfilled his promise and gave her a home in his own happy family.

New Bedford

From the American Union.

TOO WILLING BY HALF—A BOARDING-HOUSE SKECH.

BY THE YOUNG 'UN.

Many of our readers will recognize the point of the following joke, which we heard related "long time ago," but which we never saw in print. It is a "good un," and will bear retelling.

While General Jackson was President of the United States, he was tormented day after day by importunate visitors, [as most chief magistrates of this "great country" are], whom he did not care to see—and in consequence, he gave strict directions to the messenger at his door to admit only certain persons on a particular day, which he was busier with state affairs, than usual.

In spite of this peremptory order, however, the attendant bolted into his apartment, during the forenoon, and informed the general that a person was outside whom he could not control, and who claimed to see him—orders or no orders.

"By the eternal!" exclaimed the old man, nervously, "I won't submit to this annoyance. Who is it?"

"Don't know, Sir."

"Don't know! What's his name?"

"His name! Beg pardon, Sir—it's a woman."

"A woman! Show her in James; show her in," said the President, wiping his face; and the next moment, there entered the general's apartment, a neatly clad female of past the "middle age," who advanced courteously towards the old man, and accepted the chair he offered her.

"Be seated, Madam," he said.

"Thank you," responded the lady, throwing aside her veil, and revealing a handsome face to her entertainer.

"My mission here to-day, general," continued the fair speaker, "is a novel one, and you cannot aid me perhaps."

"Madam," said the general, "command me."

"You are very kind, Sir. I am a poor woman, general—"

"Poverty is no crime, madam"

"No, sir. But I have a little family to care for—I am a widow, sir; and a clerk employed in one of the departments of your administration, is indebted to me for board to a considerable amount, which I cannot collect. I need the money, sadly, and I come to ask if a portion of his pay cannot be stopped from time to time, until this claim of mine—an honest one, general, of which he had the full value—shall be canceled."

"I really—madam—that is, I have no control, in that way—how much is the bill?"

"Seventy dollars, sir; here it is."

"Exactly: I see. And his salary, madam?"

"It is said to be \$1,200 a year."

"And not pay his board-bill?"

"As you see, sir—it has been standing five months, unpaid. Three days hence, he will draw his monthly pay; and I thought, sir; if you would be kind enough to—"

"Yes, I have it. Go to him again, and get his note to-day at thirty days."

"His note, sir! It would not be worth the paper on which it was written; he pays no one a dollar voluntarily."

"But he will give you his note—will he not, madam?"

"Oh, yes—he would be glad to have a respite in that way for a month, no doubt."

"That's right, then. Go to him, obtain his note, at thirty days from to-day, give him a receipt in full, and come to me, this evening."

The lady departed, called upon the young clerk, dunned him for the amount—at which he only smiled—and, finally, asked him to give her his note for it.

"To be sure," said he, "give a note—sart'n and much good may it do you, mum."

"You'll pay it when it falls due, won't you, sir, thirty days hence?"

"O, yes—sart'n, of course I will; I always pay my notes, mum, I do!" and as the lady departed, the knowing young gent, believed he had accomplished a very neat trick, once more.

"I wonder what the deuce she'll do with that note! Gad! I'd like to settle some of the other accounts, in the same way. Hope she'll have a good time getting the money on that bit of paper. John Smith is rather too well known for that!" and he turned with a chuckle, to his books, again.

The poor boarding-house keeper called again upon the general a few hours afterwards.

"Did you get the note, madam?"

"Yes, sir—here it is."

The President quickly turned it over, and with a dash of his pen, wrote the name of Andrew Jackson upon the back of it!

"Take that to the bank to-morrow morning, madam, and you can get the money for it," he said, hurriedly.

The lady acted accordingly, and found no difficulty in obtaining the cash for it, at sight.

A week before that month's termination, Mr. John Smith received a notice to the following effect:

BANK OF WASHINGTON.—1832.

Sir—Your note for seventy dollars, is due on the 27th inst., at this bank, and you are requested to call and pay the same.

Cashier.

"Ha, ha!" screamed John, upon reading this brief note. "A capital joke, that. Can't cum it mum—can't no how!—Scarecrow—left for collection—I understand—won't do—no go!" and John very soon forgot it.

But "pay day" came round again—and John took his monthly stipend once more, \$100, from the cashier of the department, as usual. As he passed down the avenue, the unpaid board-bill suddenly entered his head.

"Who the deuce now, has been fool enough to help the old 'ooman, in this business, I wonder?" said John, to himself. Gad! I'll go and see. It's all a hum, I know; but I'd like to know if she has really fooled any body with that bit o' paper!" and entering the bank, he asked for the note, "left for collection against him."

"It was discounted," said the teller.

"Discounted! why who in the world will discount my note!" asked John amazed.

"Any body with such a backer as you have got on this."

"Backer! me—backer, who?"

"Here's the note; you can see," said the teller, handing him the document—on which John instantly recognized the bold signature of the then President of the United States!